Television and Political Mobilization for Voter Education in the 2023 Presidential Election: A Study of *Ait*'s *People, Politics and Power* in Lokoja, Kogi State

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Abstract

This study examined how television contributed to political mobilisation and voter education during Nigeria's 2023 presidential election, focusing on *Africa Independent Television*'s (*AIT*) *People, Politics and Power* programme in Lokoja Local Government Area of Kogi State. The study was guided by five objectives, which examined viewers' exposure to the programme, political awareness, perceived mobilisation, factors influencing exposure, and challenges affecting its effectiveness. A survey research design was adopted, while the population of the study was 316,021 and 384 was determined as the sample size using the Kretcie and Morgan sampling table. Respondents were selected through a multistage sampling procedure across four locations in Lokoja. Of the 384 copies of questionnaire administered, 370 usable copies were retrieved and analysed using frequencies, percentages, mean scores and standard deviations, with 3.00 as the decision benchmark. The findings showed that respondents had high exposure to the programme with a cumulative mean of 4.09. The programme was also perceived to have improved political awareness, with a cumulative mean of 4.14, while its perceived contribution to political mobilisation and electoral participation recorded a cumulative mean of 4.12. Political interest, *AIT* availability, programme timing, social media promotion, and electricity or network conditions influenced exposure. However, limited access, perceived political bias, time constraints and misinformation were identified as major challenges. The study concludes that television remains relevant to political information and mobilisation, but its effectiveness depends on accessibility, credibility, engaging content and audience needs and effective engagement with changing media habits.

Keywords: Television, political mobilisation, electioneering, political awareness, *AIT*, 2023 presidential election.

Introduction

The mass media remain central to the functioning of democratic societies because they provide citizens with information needed to understand political events, assess

competing viewpoints and make informed decisions about public affairs. Television, in particular, has continued to occupy an important place in political communication because it combines spoken words, visual presentation, interviews, debates and expert analysis in ways that can make political issues more accessible to a broad audience. Although Nigeria's media environment has changed considerably with the rapid growth of social media and online news, television has not lost its relevance. The Reuters Institute's *Digital News Report 2024* observes that Nigerian audiences increasingly consume news through digital and social platforms, yet national broadcasting organisations remain important sources of information and are still associated with perceptions of credibility and trust among many audiences. Recent evidence on the 2023 presidential election similarly shows that political communication operated within a hybrid media environment in which traditional and digital platforms interacted in shaping voters' exposure to political messages (Babajide, 2026). Against this background, television political programmes remain relevant not simply as channels for transmitting campaign information, but as spaces where political actors, journalists, analysts and citizens can discuss elections, public policies and issues of national importance.

The importance of such programmes becomes clearer when political mobilization is considered. Political mobilization goes beyond informing citizens that an election is taking place; it involves stimulating political interest, improving political knowledge, encouraging discussion and creating conditions that can motivate citizens to participate in democratic activities. The 2023 presidential election in Nigeria provided an important setting for examining this relationship because it attracted extensive media attention while also taking place amid concerns about misinformation, political distrust and changing patterns of media consumption. Recent studies have shown that misinformation and disinformation became significant features of Nigeria's electoral communication environment, with potential implications for public trust, voter attitudes and democratic participation (Akinola et al., 2024; Ibrahim & Ekdale, 2025). At the same time, studies of the election have drawn attention to the media's role in determining which political issues received public attention, while also raising questions about whether election coverage sufficiently prioritised substantive issues such as education, healthcare and security. It was within this complex communication environment that Africa Independent Television (*AIT*), through its *People, Politics and Power* programme, provided political discussions, interviews, election analysis, policy debates and public affairs content before and during the 2023 presidential election. The programme therefore provides a useful context for examining whether sustained television exposure could move audiences beyond passive information

consumption towards greater political awareness and electoral participation. The relevance of audience motivation is also supported by recent Uses and Gratifications research showing that seeking political information through media can encourage interpersonal political discussion and strengthen intentions to participate politically (Cho et al., 2023).

However, the existence of political programming does not automatically mean that it produces effective political mobilization. The central problem addressed by this study is therefore whether exposure to *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power* actually translated into increased political awareness and mobilization among viewers during the 2023 presidential election. The problem is further complicated by factors such as access to television, electricity supply, programme scheduling, broadcast reach, audience interest, perceptions of political bias and the growing attraction of digital platforms. These concerns are particularly important in an environment where false and misleading political information can circulate rapidly across digital platforms and complicate citizens' efforts to distinguish credible political information from unreliable claims (Akinola et al., 2024; Ibrahim & Ekdale, 2025). The study is consequently anchored on Agenda-Setting Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory. Agenda-Setting Theory provides a basis for understanding how repeated attention to political issues may influence what audiences regard as important, while Uses and Gratifications Theory explains how audiences actively select media content to satisfy needs for information, political understanding and orientation. Recent applications of these perspectives to political communication continue to demonstrate their usefulness in explaining how media exposure, audience motivations and political discussion can be connected to political engagement (Babajide, 2026; Cho et al., 2023). It is against this theoretical and empirical background that the present study examines the role of *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power* programme in mobilizing citizens during Nigeria's 2023 presidential election, with particular attention to audience exposure, political awareness, mobilization, factors influencing exposure and the challenges affecting the programme's effectiveness.

Objectives of the Study

The study is based on the following objectives:

1. to determine the extent to which viewers in Lokoja were exposed to *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power* programme during the 2023 presidential election.
2. to assess the level of political awareness created among viewers in Lokoja through *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power* programme during the 2023 presidential election.

3. to examine the influence of *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power* programme on political mobilization and electoral participation among viewers in Lokoja during the 2023 presidential election.
4. to identify the factors that influenced Lokoja viewers' exposure to *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power* programme during the 2023 presidential election.
5. to determine the challenges associated with the use of *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power* programme as a tool for political mobilization in Lokoja during the 2023 presidential election.

Scope of the Study

The study focuses on the role of *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power* programme in mobilizing citizens for the 2023 presidential election. It covers audience exposure, political awareness, political mobilization and electoral participation, factors influencing exposure, and challenges associated with using the programme for political mobilization. Geographically, the study area is Lokoja Kogi State. Thematically, the study is confined to television, political communication, electioneering, political awareness and political mobilization. Radio, newspapers and other platforms are considered only where necessary for background or comparison. The study is also limited to the 2023 presidential election and does not attempt to evaluate the overall performance of the election or the political parties beyond their relevance to the study objectives.

Literature Review

Television Exposure and Political Communication

Television exposure refers to the extent, frequency and duration with which individuals encounter television content. In political communication, exposure is important because audiences cannot easily be influenced by political information that they never encounter. Television provides a distinctive form of political communication because it combines spoken explanations with images, interviews, debates, news reports and live events. This combination can make political issues easier to follow and can bring political actors and electoral issues closer to citizens. During election periods, therefore, repeated exposure to political programmes can give viewers opportunities to follow campaign developments, compare political positions and develop a better understanding of the issues surrounding an election.

In Nigeria, the continued relevance of television needs to be understood within a changing media environment. Audiences now move between television, social media, online news and other digital platforms rather than depending exclusively on one medium. Recent research on the 2023 presidential election describes this

environment as increasingly hybrid, with traditional and digital forms of political communication operating alongside one another. Babajide (2026), for instance, found that voters encountered political communication through several channels, with television advertisements forming part of a broader communication mix that also included social media and physical campaign activities. This suggests that exposure to *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power* should not be understood merely as whether viewers watched the programme once or occasionally, but in terms of the extent to which the programme provided sustained contact with political information during the election period.

For the present study, audience exposure is particularly significant because *People, Politics and Power* focuses on governance, elections, public policy, political developments and other national issues. Regular exposure could consequently provide viewers with repeated opportunities to encounter political arguments and election-related information. However, exposure alone does not establish political influence. What matters is whether exposure contributes to greater political understanding and eventually encourages citizens to become more involved in the electoral process.

Television and Political Awareness

Political awareness concerns what citizens know and understand about political institutions, candidates, parties, electoral procedures, public policies and their civic responsibilities. It is an important foundation for meaningful political participation because citizens need some level of political knowledge before they can reasonably evaluate political choices. In the context of elections, voter education may include information about registration, voting procedures, candidates, political parties, polling arrangements, electoral rights and responsibilities.

The mass media have traditionally performed an important educational function in this regard. Ijeh and Abimbola (2023) argue that mass media can draw public attention to important electoral issues and provide voters with information necessary for informed participation. Their discussion of the 2023 Nigerian elections particularly emphasises the usefulness of radio and television for explaining electoral information in accessible ways. Similarly, Chigbo (2024) notes that interactive mass media can bring electoral issues into public attention while creating opportunities for audiences to seek clarification and engage with political information.

Recent empirical evidence also gives practical support to this relationship. Odionye et al. (2023) examined NTA voter-education programmes in relation to awareness and participation during the 2023 general elections, demonstrating continuing scholarly interest in the ability of television-based voter education to improve citizens' political knowledge and electoral involvement. In a related study, Bassey (2024) specifically examined audience evaluation of an INEC voter-education programme broadcast on *AIT* during the 2023 elections. The study is particularly relevant to the present research because it demonstrates that *AIT* itself constituted an important platform for election-related public communication during the period. Thus, political awareness in this study is understood not simply as knowing that an election was occurring, but as gaining useful knowledge and understanding from the programme about political actors, electoral issues, procedures and civic responsibilities.

Political Mobilization and Electoral Participation

Political mobilization refers to the process through which citizens are encouraged, motivated and prepared to participate in political and electoral activities. It may take the form of voting, political discussions, campaign involvement, attendance at political meetings, expression of political opinions and other forms of civic engagement. Within a democratic system, mobilization is important because political information has limited democratic value if citizens remain unwilling or unable to participate.

Television can contribute to mobilization by providing information that reduces uncertainty and gives citizens reasons to pay attention to political affairs. Political interviews, debates and analytical programmes can expose viewers to competing viewpoints and stimulate conversations about candidates and public policies. Recent research supports the idea that political news consumption can be associated with political participation. Martin (2023), drawing on Uses and Gratifications Theory, found that people's motivation to remain informed was positively associated with indicators of political participation, including intention to vote. Cho et al. (2023) similarly found that motivations for consuming political news could encourage political discussion, which in turn was connected with intentions to participate politically.

The relationship is particularly relevant to *People, Politics and Power* because political programmes can provide more than straightforward election news. Through discussions, interviews and analysis, such programmes can help audiences connect political issues with their everyday concerns. The conceptual expectation

of this study is therefore that viewers who are adequately exposed to relevant and credible political content may become more informed and interested in electoral affairs and may subsequently be more willing to participate. Nevertheless, mobilization should not be treated as an automatic consequence of television exposure. Citizens make political choices within broader social, economic and institutional circumstances, while the credibility and perceived fairness of media messages can also affect their willingness to act on the information received.

Factors that Influence Audience Exposure

Audience exposure to political television programmes is shaped by more than the availability of a programme. Personal interest in politics is one important factor. Individuals who already consider political affairs important are more likely to deliberately seek political programmes, follow election discussions and spend time watching political analysis. This observation fits the Uses and Gratifications perspective, which views audiences as active participants who select media content according to their needs and interests. Cho et al. (2023) found that motivations such as convenience and the desire to obtain political information influenced people's use of political news content.

Other factors are more structural. The availability and strength of the television signal, electricity supply, programme scheduling and the accessibility of *AIT* can determine whether interested viewers are actually able to watch the programme. The rise of social media also affects exposure because audiences increasingly divide their attention among competing sources of political information. Guanah's (2024) study of television-station preferences in Edo State found that political audiences selected stations partly because of the political information and satisfaction they obtained from them, while also watching other stations for additional information. This reinforces the view that audience exposure is a combination of personal motivation, programme appeal, accessibility and the wider media environment.

Challenges of Television as a Political Mobilization Tool

Although television possesses considerable potential for political education and mobilization, its effectiveness can be weakened by practical and communication-related challenges. Poor electricity supply can interrupt viewing, while limited signal coverage can exclude potential audiences. Inconvenient programme schedules may also prevent people from watching programmes regularly, particularly when they have work, school or family responsibilities. The growing availability of alternative digital sources creates another challenge because

television now competes for audience attention with social media, online news and other forms of digital content.

Credibility is equally important. Political programmes may lose some of their mobilizing capacity when audiences perceive them as biased or politically partisan. Research on Nigeria's 2023 election has also identified misinformation and information disorder as important features of the electoral communication environment. Ibrahim and Ekdale (2025) found that false and misleading information circulated extensively during the 2023 presidential campaigns and that political actors themselves sometimes responded to or reinforced such information. Inobemhe et al. (2024) likewise identified misinformation, political polarisation and the digital divide as challenges associated with the contemporary Nigerian electoral media environment. These developments make credibility, verification and balanced presentation particularly important for television programmes seeking to mobilize citizens responsibly.

AIT and *People, Politics and Power*

Africa Independent Television is one of Nigeria's privately owned television broadcasters, and People, Politics and Power is presented in the study as a political affairs programme dealing with governance, elections, public policy and national political developments. Its format provides a useful setting for examining the relationship between specialized political programming and audience behaviour. The programme's importance lies in its capacity to combine current political information with discussion and analysis. The study therefore treats it not merely as a source of news but as a forum through which viewers encounter political issues, candidates and interpretations of the electoral process.

Review of Empirical Studies

Recent empirical studies provide useful evidence for understanding the relationship between television exposure, voter education, political awareness and electoral participation in Nigeria. Odionye et al. (2023) examined the assessment of NTA voter-education programmes among 384 residents of Ughelli South Local Government Area of Delta State in relation to the 2023 general elections. Using a survey design, simple random sampling and a structured questionnaire, the researchers analysed the data with percentages, means and standard deviations. Their findings showed very high exposure to the NTA voter-education programmes and indicated that the programmes improved respondents' awareness of political issues while also contributing positively to their attitudes and participation in the elections. The study is important to the present research because it demonstrates empirically that television-based voter education can go beyond information

dissemination to influence citizens' orientation towards electoral participation. However, its focus on NTA and voter education generally, rather than a specific political affairs programme on *AIT*, leaves room for examining whether a programme such as *People, Politics and Power*, with its emphasis on political discussion and analysis, produces similar outcomes.

A closely related study was conducted by Bassey (2024) on audience evaluation of the INEC Half Hour Programme broadcast on *AIT* and its contribution to voter education during the 2023 general elections. Using a survey research design among residents of Lafia metropolis and drawing on Cognitive Mobilisation Theory, the study found substantial audience exposure to the programme and reported that viewers considered it useful for understanding voting procedures, voter registration, citizens' rights and responsibilities, electoral malpractice, candidate profiles and manifestoes. The study further concluded that the programme contributed to mobilising residents for electoral participation. The closeness of this study to the present research is particularly striking because both examine *AIT* within the context of the 2023 elections. Nevertheless, Bassey's study concentrates on an INEC-sponsored voter-education programme, whereas the present study focuses on *People, Politics and Power* as a political affairs programme. This distinction is important because it shifts attention from formal voter education to the broader role of political discussion, analysis and public affairs programming in stimulating political awareness and mobilization.

Similarly, Igboeli and Omoko (2025) comparatively examined NTA and *AIT* coverage of the 2023 presidential election in Akwa Ibom and Delta States. Through content analysis of prime-time news, special reports and political commentaries, the study considered the frequency, tone and framing of presidential candidates and electoral events. The researchers found that both broadcasters maintained some degree of objectivity, although subtle forms of bias persisted. Their study also reported that respondents perceived *AIT* as having a stronger contribution to voter-registration mobilization and to providing information that helped citizens identify polling units, while both stations were perceived as carrying some hate-speech content. This finding introduces an important qualification to the otherwise positive picture emerging from television-based voter-education studies. It suggests that television can mobilize audiences while simultaneously facing credibility and impartiality concerns. For the present study, this is significant because it makes perceived bias and credibility relevant to understanding not only exposure but also the conditions under which *People, Politics and Power* could effectively mobilize its audience.

More recently, Ogunsola, Kente, and Santas (2026) investigated Nigerian voters' perceptions of the credibility of conventional and digital media for electoral discourse during the 2023 presidential election. Using mixed methods involving a survey of 397 respondents across Lagos and Oyo States and interviews with 14 informants, the study found that conventional media continued to command considerable trust, with radio and television remaining important sources of electoral information, even though digital media had expanded its influence. The study also found that awareness was associated with electoral participation and that many voters continued to use digital media as an alternative source of political information. The significance of this finding lies in its recognition that television no longer operates in isolation. Viewers can encounter the same political issue through television, Facebook, X, online news and other platforms, and their judgement may be shaped by information gathered across these channels. This provides a useful context for the present study because the effectiveness of *People, Politics and Power* must be considered alongside the changing media habits and credibility judgements of contemporary Nigerian audiences.

Another recent study that broadens this discussion is Babajide (2026), which examined the forms, extent and frequency of political communication during the 2023 presidential election in Lagos State. Using a mixed-method descriptive survey involving 600 registered voters and nine key informants, the study found that electioneering operated through a hybrid communication environment involving physical rallies, television advertisements and social-media campaigns. Although printed materials recorded the highest extent of exposure, social-media campaigns were encountered most frequently on a continuous, day-to-day basis. The study therefore concludes that contemporary election communication cannot be adequately understood by looking at a single medium because offline visibility and digital communication increasingly reinforce each other. This finding both supports and challenges the earlier television-centred studies. While television remains capable of educating and mobilizing citizens, its influence now occurs within a crowded media environment in which audiences continuously move between conventional and digital sources.

Taken together, these studies reveal a fairly consistent pattern: television remains capable of creating political awareness and encouraging electoral participation, but its influence is neither automatic nor independent of the wider communication environment. Odionye et al. (2023) demonstrate the positive relationship between television voter education, awareness and participation; Bassey (2024) shows that an *AIT*-based programme could provide useful electoral knowledge and mobilize

audiences; and Igboeli and Omoko (2025) add the important issue of media bias and credibility. Ogunsola et al. (2026) and Babajide (2026), meanwhile, demonstrate that television now competes and interacts with digital media in shaping electoral communication. The major gap that emerges is therefore not whether television can influence voters, but how a specific political affairs programme, such as *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power*, contributes to exposure, political awareness and mobilization, and which factors and challenges determine the strength of that contribution. This gap directly justifies the present study, which concentrates on the programme itself and examines the five interconnected dimensions of exposure, awareness, mobilization, factors influencing exposure and challenges affecting its effectiveness. The focus is particularly appropriate because the study's scope specifically identifies *People, Politics and Power* as the programme under investigation in Lokoja Local Government Area of Kogi State.

Theoretical Framework

Agenda-Setting Theory was propounded by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972 following their study of the 1968 United States presidential election. The central argument of the theory is that the mass media may not necessarily tell people what to think, but they can influence what people think about by giving greater attention, prominence and repetition to particular issues. McCombs and Shaw's original formulation demonstrated that the issues receiving considerable attention in the media tended to become more prominent in the minds of the public. The theory therefore places emphasis on the relationship between the media agenda and the public agenda. In contemporary media research, the theory has developed beyond its original newspaper-centred formulation to accommodate television, social media and other digital platforms. More recent scholarship similarly argues that agenda-setting remains useful in today's highly fragmented media environment, although the process is no longer necessarily a simple one-way movement from professional media organisations to audiences.

The major assumptions of Agenda-Setting Theory are that media organisations select certain issues for attention, the amount of prominence given to an issue can influence its perceived importance, and repeated exposure can increase the salience of that issue among audiences. The theory also assumes that the media possess the capacity to influence public priorities through decisions about what to report, what to emphasise and what to leave relatively unattended. In political communication, this means that a television programme that repeatedly discusses elections, candidates, political parties, governance, electoral procedures or public policy can make these matters more noticeable to its audience. Recent empirical research

demonstrates that agenda-setting remains relevant to election communication. For example, Fazli and Putri (2024) found that Narasi TV's *Musyawarah* programme deliberately placed particular presidential-election issues on its media agenda, including issues that the researchers considered insufficiently addressed by other media outlets. Similarly, Babajide (2026) found that political communication during Nigeria's 2023 presidential election involved television, printed materials, rallies and social media, demonstrating that voters encountered political issues through a hybrid communication environment. These findings are important because they show that media salience remains meaningful even when audiences have several competing sources of political information. However, the theory has also attracted criticism. It can appear to overstate media power by giving insufficient attention to audience selectivity, personal experience, political predispositions and interpersonal communication. The emergence of digital platforms has made this criticism even more relevant because audiences can now encounter, reject, reinterpret or amplify media agendas themselves. Recent scholarship describes contemporary agenda-setting as increasingly multidirectional, with platforms, users and different media organisations participating in the construction of public agendas.

The relevance of Agenda-Setting Theory to the present study is particularly strong because *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power* is a political affairs programme whose content centres on governance, elections, public policy, political developments and national issues. By deciding which political issues to discuss, how frequently they should receive attention and which political actors or electoral matters should be brought before viewers, the programme could contribute to determining the issues that became salient among its audience during the 2023 presidential election. The theory therefore provides a useful explanation for the first two objectives of the study—viewers' exposure to the programme and the political awareness generated through that exposure—because repeated attention to election-related matters can increase the visibility and perceived importance of those matters. It also provides a basis for examining the programme's potential contribution to political mobilization: when citizens repeatedly encounter information about candidates, electoral procedures, governance and issues of public concern, such information may stimulate political interest and discussion and create a stronger orientation towards electoral participation. However, the study does not assume that television exposure automatically produces voting or other forms of participation. Rather, it recognises that the influence of the programme may be strengthened or weakened by factors such as accessibility, electricity supply, programme scheduling, audience interest, competing digital media and perceptions of credibility or bias. These challenges are

already identified within the study's conceptualisation of the problem. Thus, Agenda-Setting Theory provides an appropriate framework for examining how *People, Politics and Power* potentially shaped the political issues that viewers paid attention to, how that attention related to political awareness, and how the resulting salience may have contributed to political mobilization during the 2023 presidential election.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and Gratifications Theory is generally associated with the work of Elihu Katz, Jay G. Blumler and Michael Gurevitch, particularly their influential 1974 formulation of the perspective. Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) developed the perspective more systematically by shifting attention from the question of "What do the media do to people?" to "What do people do with the media?" This represents an important change in the understanding of media effects. The emphasis is therefore placed on audience motives, choices, expectations and the satisfaction obtained from media use. Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) is an audience-centred communication theory that explains why people actively choose particular media and media content to satisfy specific needs or desires. Rather than viewing audiences as passive recipients who simply absorb whatever the media present, the theory sees them as active participants who make choices about what to watch, listen to, read or access based on what they expect to gain from the medium.

The theory rests on several important assumptions. First, audiences are active rather than passive. People do not simply consume everything presented to them by the media. They make choices based on their interests, circumstances and expectations. In this study, viewers' political interest was identified as one of the factors that increased their exposure to *People, Politics and Power*. Second, media use is goal-oriented. People usually have reasons for selecting particular media content. A person may watch a political programme to understand an election, assess candidates, follow political debates or obtain information about voting procedures. Third, different people may use the same media content for different purposes. Two viewers may watch the same programme but derive different benefits from it. One may be interested in candidates, another in electoral procedures, while another may simply want to follow current political developments. Fourth, audiences are capable of selecting among competing media sources. People can choose television, radio, newspapers, social media, online news or interpersonal discussions according to their needs and circumstances. This assumption is particularly important in the present study because Nigerian audiences increasingly operate within a hybrid media environment. The study observes that television now functions alongside

social media and online news rather than in isolation. Fifth, media compete with other sources of need satisfaction. A viewer seeking political information may obtain it from television, social media, friends, family members, political meetings or online platforms. Consequently, a television programme must provide content that audiences consider useful and relevant if it is to retain their attention. Sixth, media use can produce different forms of gratification. In the political context, these may include information, political understanding, orientation, confidence in interpreting political events, interpersonal discussion and motivation for civic participation.

Uses and Gratifications Theory is highly relevant to this study of *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power* because the study is fundamentally concerned with the relationship between audience exposure, political information, awareness and mobilisation. First, the theory helps explain why viewers exposed themselves to the programme. The study found that respondents' political interest was an important factor influencing their exposure, while the availability of *AIT*, programme timing and social-media promotion also affected viewing. This supports the UGT position that media exposure is partly determined by audience needs and motivations rather than being entirely imposed by the media. t.

Political needs and interests → selection of *People, Politics and Power* → exposure and engagement → political information and understanding → political discussion/interest → potential political mobilisation and participation. The theory does not suggest that every person who watches the programme will automatically vote or become politically active. Rather, it recognises that media effects depend on what viewers seek, what they obtain from the programme, how useful they consider the information, and the wider social and political circumstances in which they make decisions. This makes Uses and Gratifications Theory particularly appropriate for the present study because the findings demonstrate that viewers were not merely passive recipients of *AIT*'s political messages. Their political interest, accessibility to *AIT*, programme scheduling, social-media promotion and personal circumstances influenced their exposure, while the information they obtained from the programme was associated with increased political awareness and perceived mobilisation.

Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design to examine the role of television in mobilising viewers for voter education and political participation during the 2023 presidential election. The design was considered appropriate because the study

sought to obtain information directly from viewers of *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power* programme concerning their level of exposure, political awareness, perceived mobilisation, factors that influenced their viewing and the challenges that affected the programme's effectiveness in Lokoja, the Capital of Kogi State, Nigeria. Lokoja was considered appropriate for the study because, as the state capital, it provides a politically active environment in which residents are regularly exposed to political information through television, radio, social media and other communication channels. The study focused specifically on viewers of *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power* programme within the local government area. The population of the study was based on the 2023 projected population of 316,021 for Lokoja Local Government Area, derived from projections based on the 2006 National Population Census (NBC, 2023). Given the size of the population, it was necessary to select a manageable sample that could adequately represent the target population while remaining feasible for data collection. A sample size of 384 respondents was adopted for the study using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling table. The sample was considered adequate for obtaining respondents' views on their exposure to and perceptions of *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power* programme during the 2023 presidential election. The study employed a multistage sampling procedure. This approach was adopted to ensure that respondents were drawn from different parts of Lokoja Local Government Area rather than concentrating the survey in a single location. At the first stage, four locations—Adankolo, Felele, Kabawa and Lokongoma—were selected through simple random sampling. At the second stage, the total sample of 384 respondents was distributed equally among the four selected locations. Consequently, 96 respondents were allocated to each location. At the third stage, accidental sampling was employed in selecting respondents who were available and willing to participate in the study until the required number was reached in each location. The respondents were selected on the basis of their relevance to the study, particularly their exposure to *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power* programme. This was important because the study was concerned with the experiences and perceptions of actual viewers rather than members of the general population who had no knowledge of the programme. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed in line with the five objectives of the study. The questionnaire consisted of demographic questions and statements measuring respondents' views on television exposure, political awareness, political mobilisation, factors influencing exposure and challenges associated with the use of the programme as a political mobilisation platform. The substantive items were structured on a five-point Likert scale comprising Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The use of the Likert scale enabled respondents to indicate the degree to which they

agreed or disagreed with each statement. To ensure that the questionnaire adequately addressed the issues covered by the study, it was subjected to face and content validation by two researchers. The reliability of the research instrument was established through a pilot test involving 38 respondents, representing approximately 10% of the proposed sample size of 384. The pilot study was conducted in Ajaokuta Township, Ajaokuta Local Government Area of Kogi State, which was outside the main study area. The responses obtained from the pilot exercise were subjected to reliability test using Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient, which produced a correlation coefficient of 0.91. This result indicated a satisfactory level of consistency for the instrument and provided confidence in its suitability for the main study.

Copies of the questionnaire were administered face-to-face to respondents with the assistance of trained research assistants. The use of direct administration made it possible for the researcher and research assistants to clarify any aspect of the questionnaire that respondents might not have understood without influencing their responses. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and were encouraged to provide honest responses based on their experience with *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power* programme during the 2023 presidential election. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured that the information provided would be treated confidentially and used strictly for academic purposes. A total of 384 copies of the questionnaire were administered, out of which 370 usable copies were retrieved and used for the analysis. The 14 copies that were not retrieved or were wrongly completed were excluded from the analysis. The completed questionnaires were carefully checked, coded and entered into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 27 for analysis. Frequencies and percentages were used to present respondents' demographic characteristics, while mean scores and standard deviations were used to analyse the substantive research questions. A criterion mean of 3.00 was adopted as the decision benchmark for the five-point Likert scale. Thus, a mean score of 3.00 or above was regarded as acceptance or agreement, while a mean score below 3.00 was interpreted as rejection or disagreement. The approach provided a clear basis for determining respondents' overall perceptions of their exposure to *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power*, the political awareness generated by the programme, its perceived contribution to political mobilisation, the factors influencing exposure and the challenges limiting its effectiveness.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section presents and analyses the data collected from respondents in relation to the objectives of the study. A total of three hundred and eighty-four copies of questionnaire were administered while three hundred and seventy were retrieved. The remaining fourteen were wrongly filled or not retrieved by the respondents. The analysis is based on the 370 copies retrieved.

Table 1: Extent of exposure to *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power* programme during the 2023 presidential election in Lokoja Kogi State

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
I was regularly exposed to the programme.	190 (51.4%)	110 (29.7%)	18 (4.9%)	30 (8.1%)	22 (5.9%)	4.12	1.19	Accepted
I watched it throughout the election period.	185 (50.0%)	115 (31.1%)	15 (4.1%)	32 (8.6%)	23 (6.2%)	4.10	1.20	Accepted
The broadcast schedule enabled regular viewing.	170 (45.9%)	125 (33.8%)	18 (4.9%)	34 (9.2%)	23 (6.2%)	4.04	1.20	Accepted
I followed most editions.	180 (48.6%)	120 (32.4%)	17 (4.6%)	30 (8.1%)	23 (6.2%)	4.09	1.19	Accepted
My exposure was sufficient.	178 (48.1%)	122 (33.0%)	16 (4.3%)	31 (8.4%)	23 (6.2%)	4.08	1.19	Accepted

Cumulative Mean = 4.09. The cumulative mean is above the criterion mean of 3.00, indicating overall agreement with the statements under this objective.

The findings in Table 1 indicate that respondents had a high level of exposure to *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power* programme during the 2023 presidential election. Across the five statements, the responses were generally concentrated around Strongly Agree and Agree, while the neutral responses remained relatively low, ranging from 15 to 18 respondents. The individual mean scores were all above the criterion mean of 3.00, producing a cumulative mean of 4.09. This suggests that the programme was not merely available to respondents but was actually followed with considerable regularity during the election period. The finding implies that the programme succeeded in attracting and retaining the attention of its audience through its political discussions, election-related analysis and other public affairs content. In practical terms, the high level of exposure provides a useful foundation for examining whether such exposure translated into political awareness and mobilization. The result is also consistent with the study's objective of determining the extent to which viewers encountered the programme during the election period.

Table 2: Level of political awareness created among viewers through *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power* programme during the 2023 presidential election in Lokoja Kogi State

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
The programme improved my political awareness.	195 (52.7%)	112 (30.3%)	15 (4.1%)	28 (7.6%)	20 (5.4%)	4.17	1.15	Accepted
It increased my knowledge of candidates.	188 (50.8%)	116 (31.4%)	16 (4.3%)	28 (7.6%)	22 (5.9%)	4.14	1.17	Accepted
It improved understanding of electoral issues.	192 (51.9%)	111 (30.0%)	17 (4.6%)	28 (7.6%)	22 (5.9%)	4.14	1.18	Accepted
It enhanced understanding of voting procedures.	185 (50.0%)	118 (31.9%)	15 (4.1%)	29 (7.8%)	23 (6.2%)	4.12	1.18	Accepted
It enabled informed political decisions.	190 (51.4%)	114 (30.8%)	16 (4.3%)	27 (7.3%)	23 (6.2%)	4.14	1.18	Accepted

Cumulative Mean = 4.14. The cumulative mean is above the criterion mean of 3.00, indicating overall agreement with the statements under this objective.

Table 2 shows that *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power* programme contributed substantially to respondents' political awareness during the 2023 presidential election. The responses to all five statements recorded strong levels of agreement, with individual mean scores exceeding the 3.00 criterion mean and a cumulative mean of 4.14. Respondents therefore generally agreed that the programme improved their awareness of political issues, increased their knowledge of candidates, enhanced their understanding of electoral issues and voting procedures, and helped them make more informed political decisions. The relatively small number of neutral responses indicates that only a limited proportion of respondents were uncertain about the programme's contribution to their political understanding. The finding suggests that the programme performed an important informational and educational role by providing viewers with political discussions and election-related information that could help them make sense of the electoral environment. In relation to the second objective, the result provides evidence that exposure to the programme was associated with a strong perception of improved political awareness among the respondents.

Table 3: Influence of *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power* programme on political mobilization and electoral participation among viewers during the 2023 presidential election in Lokoja, Kogi State

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
The programme motivated me to vote.	190 (51.4%)	115 (31.1%)	16 (4.3%)	27 (7.3%)	22 (5.9%)	4.15	1.17	Accepted
It encouraged civic participation.	182 (49.2%)	120 (32.4%)	17 (4.6%)	28 (7.6%)	23 (6.2%)	4.11	1.18	Accepted
It increased interest in politics.	188 (50.8%)	118 (31.9%)	15 (4.1%)	27 (7.3%)	22 (5.9%)	4.14	1.16	Accepted
It influenced my electoral participation.	180 (48.6%)	123 (33.2%)	16 (4.3%)	28 (7.6%)	23 (6.2%)	4.11	1.18	Accepted
It motivated others around me.	176 (47.6%)	126 (34.1%)	18 (4.9%)	27 (7.3%)	23 (6.2%)	4.09	1.17	Accepted

Cumulative Mean = 4.12. The cumulative mean is above the criterion mean of 3.00, indicating overall agreement with the statements under this objective.

The results presented in Table 3 demonstrate that respondents generally perceived *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power* programme as an effective source of political mobilization during the 2023 presidential election. All five statements attracted mean scores above the 3.00 criterion, while the cumulative mean of 4.12 indicates a strong overall level of agreement. Respondents particularly indicated that the programme motivated them to vote, encouraged civic participation, increased their interest in politics, influenced their electoral participation and motivated people around them. These responses suggest that the programme's influence extended beyond simply providing political information; it also encouraged viewers to think about and become involved in the electoral process. The relatively low neutral responses further suggest that most respondents had a definite opinion about the programme's mobilizing role. Although the findings should be understood as respondents' reported perceptions rather than proof that the programme alone caused electoral participation, they nevertheless indicate that *People, Politics and Power* was perceived as an important stimulus for political interest and participation. This directly addresses the third objective of the study.

Table 4: Factors that influenced viewers' exposure to *AIT*'s People, Politics and Power programme during the 2023 presidential election in Lokoja Kogi State

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
My interest in politics increased my exposure.	192 (51.9%)	110 (29.7%)	15 (4.1%)	30 (8.1%)	23 (6.2%)	4.13	1.19	Accepted
Availability of *AIT* influenced my exposure.	190 (51.4%)	112 (30.3%)	16 (4.3%)	29 (7.8%)	23 (6.2%)	4.13	1.19	Accepted
Broadcast time affected my viewing.	175 (47.3%)	120 (32.4%)	18 (4.9%)	33 (8.9%)	25 (6.8%)	4.05	1.22	Accepted
Social media promotion increased my exposure.	185 (50.0%)	116 (31.4%)	17 (4.6%)	29 (7.8%)	24 (6.5%)	4.11	1.20	Accepted
Electricity/network affected my exposure.	170 (45.9%)	125 (33.8%)	19 (5.1%)	34 (9.2%)	23 (6.2%)	4.05	1.20	Accepted

Cumulative Mean = 4.13. The cumulative mean is above the criterion mean of 3.00, indicating overall agreement with the statements under this objective.

Table 4 reveals that several personal, programme-related and environmental factors influenced respondents' exposure to *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power*. The five statements produced mean scores above the 3.00 criterion, with a cumulative mean of 4.13, indicating general agreement that political interest, *AIT*'s availability, broadcast time, social-media promotion and electricity/network conditions affected respondents' exposure. The finding is important because it shows that audience exposure cannot be explained simply by the existence of the programme. A viewer may be interested in political affairs and deliberately seek the programme, but regular viewing can still depend on whether *AIT* is accessible, whether the broadcast time is convenient, whether the programme is promoted through other media and whether electricity or network conditions permit viewing. The responses therefore present exposure as a combination of audience motivation and practical circumstances. In relation to the fourth objective, the result suggests that increasing the reach and influence of political television programmes requires attention not only to programme content but also to accessibility, scheduling, promotion and the wider communication infrastructure.

Table 5: Challenges associated with the use of *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power* programme as a tool for political mobilization during the 2023 presidential election in Lokoja, Kogi State

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
Limited access to *AIT* reduced exposure.	170 (45.9%)	120 (32.4%)	18 (4.9%)	35 (9.5%)	27 (7.3%)	4.00	1.24	Accepted
Political bias affected credibility.	165 (44.6%)	125 (33.8%)	17 (4.6%)	39 (10.5%)	24 (6.5%)	3.99	1.22	Accepted
Time constraints limited viewing.	160 (43.2%)	130 (35.1%)	15 (4.1%)	43 (11.6%)	22 (5.9%)	3.98	1.21	Accepted
Misinformation reduced programme impact.	168 (45.4%)	124 (33.5%)	20 (5.4%)	39 (10.5%)	19 (5.1%)	4.04	1.18	Accepted
The programme faced challenges as a mobilization tool.	162 (43.8%)	128 (34.6%)	18 (4.9%)	45 (12.2%)	17 (4.6%)	4.01	1.18	Accepted

Cumulative Mean = 4.01. The cumulative mean is above the criterion mean of 3.00, indicating overall agreement with the statements under this objective.

Table 5 indicates that respondents recognised several challenges that could limit the effectiveness of *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power* programme as a political mobilization tool. The five statements recorded mean scores above the 3.00 criterion, producing a cumulative mean of 4.01, which indicates overall agreement that limited access to *AIT*, perceived political bias, time constraints, misinformation and other difficulties affected the programme's effectiveness. The finding is particularly significant because it presents a more balanced picture of television's role in political communication: although respondents generally regarded the programme as informative and mobilizing, they also recognised conditions that could reduce its impact. Perceptions of political bias may weaken audience trust, while inconvenient viewing times and limited access can reduce exposure. Similarly, misinformation within the broader media environment may compete with or undermine information provided by the programme. The result therefore suggests that the programme's future effectiveness as a mobilization platform depends not only on maintaining relevant political content but also on improving accessibility, credibility, scheduling and information verification. This directly addresses the fifth objective of the study by identifying the principal challenges associated with television-based political mobilization

Discussion of Findings.

This section discusses the major findings of the study in relation to its five research objectives. The discussion connects the results from the respondents with relevant empirical studies and the central assumptions of Agenda-Setting and Uses and Gratifications Theories. Particular attention is given to how exposure to *People,*

Politics and Power shaped political awareness and perceived mobilization during the 2023 presidential election. The discussion also considers the factors that influenced viewers' exposure and the challenges that limited the programme's effectiveness.

The first finding shows that respondents had a high level of exposure to *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power* programme during the 2023 presidential election, as reflected in the overall mean score of 4.09, which was well above the 3.00 decision benchmark. Respondents generally agreed that they were regularly exposed to the programme, watched it during the election period, followed most editions and considered their level of exposure sufficient. This finding suggests that the programme succeeded in attracting sustained attention at a time when political information was particularly important to voters. It is also consistent with the findings of Odionye et al. (2023), who reported very high exposure to NTA voter-education programmes among residents of Ughelli South and linked such exposure with improved political awareness and participation. Similarly, Bassey (2024) found substantial audience exposure to an INEC voter-education programme broadcast on *AIT* during the 2023 elections, suggesting that television remained an important platform for electoral communication. The finding can be explained through the central tenet of Agenda-Setting Theory, originally advanced by McCombs and Shaw (1972), that the media may not necessarily tell people what to think, but can influence what they think about by giving selected issues greater prominence and repeated attention. In this case, the repeated presentation of election-related issues, political actors, governance matters and campaign developments gave viewers regular opportunities to think about politics. The findings are equally relevant to Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), particularly because the theory shifts attention from what the media do to audiences towards what audiences do with media. Associated particularly with Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1972), UGT conceptualises audiences as active participants who select media content to satisfy particular needs. The result is therefore important because exposure provides the first link between political television and possible changes in political understanding or engagement. The high exposure recorded in this study also reflects the continuing relevance of television within Nigeria's increasingly hybrid political communication environment, where conventional broadcasting now operates alongside social media and online platforms. Recent evidence from Nigeria's 2023 election similarly shows that voters encountered political communication through multiple channels rather than relying on one medium alone.

The second finding indicates that *People, Politics and Power* made a strong contribution to respondents' political awareness, with a cumulative mean of 4.14. Respondents agreed that the programme improved their political awareness, increased their knowledge of candidates, enhanced their understanding of electoral issues and voting procedures, and helped them make more informed political decisions. This finding demonstrates that the significance of the programme extended beyond simply providing political news. It appears to have helped viewers make sense of the election and understand some of the issues surrounding political participation. This outcome agrees closely with Odionye et al. (2023), whose study found that television voter-education programmes increased residents' awareness of political issues and positively influenced their participation in the 2023 elections. It also corresponds with Bassey (2024), who found that *AIT*'s INEC Half Hour Programme helped audiences understand voting procedures, voter registration, citizens' rights and responsibilities, electoral malpractice, candidate profiles and manifestoes. The finding is further supported by Ijeh and Abimbola (2023), who argued that mass media could draw public attention to important electoral issues and provide voters with information required for meaningful participation. Their argument fits particularly well with Agenda-Setting Theory because political awareness is partly influenced by the issues that media organisations repeatedly bring before the public. The theory's tenet of issue salience is particularly relevant here: when political issues receive sustained and prominent attention, audiences are more likely to regard them as important. The second finding on political awareness also fits the informational or cognitive dimension of Uses and Gratifications Theory. Respondents reported that the programme improved their political awareness, increased their knowledge of candidates and enhanced their understanding of electoral procedures and political issues. Thus, the high awareness score suggests that the programme did not merely expose viewers to political messages; it helped place candidates, electoral procedures, governance and political issues within the audience's field of attention. At the same time, the result should not be interpreted as suggesting that television was the only source of respondents' political knowledge. Contemporary Nigerian voters increasingly obtain political information from social media, interpersonal discussions and other sources. Nevertheless, the findings indicate that *AIT* remained capable of providing a structured and relatively sustained environment for political learning during the election period.

The third finding reveals that the programme was perceived to have a positive influence on political mobilization and electoral participation, producing a cumulative mean of 4.12. Respondents agreed that the programme motivated them

to vote, encouraged civic participation, increased their interest in politics, influenced their electoral participation and motivated people around them. This is an important finding because it suggests that the programme's perceived contribution went beyond awareness to the broader question of political engagement. The result supports Bassey's (2024) finding that *AIT*'s voter-education programming contributed to mobilising residents for electoral participation, as well as Odionye et al. (2023), who reported a positive relationship between television voter education and participation in the 2023 elections. It is also consistent with recent research showing that media engagement and public communication can shape voting decisions by directing attention towards issues such as governance, security and economic concerns. Otumala (2026), for example, found that conventional and digital media played important roles in shaping public discourse and voting decisions during Nigeria's 2023 elections, with the study explicitly applying Agenda-Setting Theory to explain how issue prominence could affect strategic voting behaviour. From the standpoint of Agenda-Setting Theory, the finding can be understood through the idea that sustained attention to political issues can increase their perceived importance to audiences. When a programme repeatedly discusses voting, civic responsibility, accountability, candidates and electoral issues, these matters may become more salient and encourage citizens to consider participation. The finding on political mobilisation can also be explained through UGT. When audiences deliberately seek political information and find that the information satisfies their needs for understanding and orientation, the experience may encourage political discussion and greater interest in participation. Cho et al. (2023) provide particularly useful comparative evidence here: their study of news-podcast use in South Korea found that motivations for political news consumption were connected with political discussion and intentions to participate. Martin and Sharma (2023) likewise linked the need for political orientation with indicators such as voter registration and intention to vote. A mean of 4.12 demonstrates a strong perception of influence, but it does not prove that the programme independently caused respondents to vote. Political participation is usually the product of several interacting influences, including personal political beliefs, family and peer influence, party mobilisation, socioeconomic circumstances and trust in the electoral process. What can reasonably be concluded is that respondents perceived *People, Politics and Power* as an important stimulus that encouraged political interest and participation.

The fourth finding demonstrates that exposure was influenced by several interconnected factors, with a cumulative mean of 4.13. Political interest, *AIT* availability, programme timing, social media promotion and electricity/network

conditions all recorded means above the 3.00 benchmark. This finding is particularly revealing because it shows that audience exposure cannot be explained simply by the quality or relevance of a programme. Viewers may be interested in politics and still be unable to follow a programme consistently if it is broadcast at an inconvenient time, if the station is difficult to receive or if electricity and network conditions interfere with viewing. The strong influence attributed to political interest suggests that audiences were not simply passive recipients of political communication; their existing interests helped determine the extent to which they sought out the programme. Although this dimension is more directly associated with audience selectivity than with the original formulation of Agenda-Setting Theory, it is important when interpreting media effects because agenda setting does not operate in a social vacuum. Contemporary agenda-setting scholarship increasingly recognises that audiences, digital platforms and different media organisations can participate in shaping the flow of public attention. The finding concerning social media promotion is especially important in this regard. It indicates that television and digital media can reinforce one another rather than necessarily functioning as competing channels. Babajide (2026) found that political communication during the 2023 presidential election operated through a hybrid environment involving television, rallies, printed materials and social media, while television advertising remained part of voters' broader exposure to political communication. Similarly, research on the 2023 elections by Suemo, Kusugh and Okonkwo (2023) found that social media platforms were highly accessible to voters and were extensively used for political campaigns, although negative ideological themes, falsehood and hate-oriented content also created problems for voter education and participation. This finding provides perhaps the clearest empirical connection with UGT. Political interest, programme availability, broadcast timing, social-media promotion and electricity/network conditions all influenced exposure. This means that audience behaviour resulted from an interaction between motivation and opportunity. The present finding therefore suggests that the reach of a political television programme can be strengthened when broadcasters use digital platforms to remind audiences about programmes, circulate highlights and maintain public attention. At the same time, infrastructure remains fundamental: a programme cannot influence viewers who cannot reliably access it.

The fifth finding identifies the major challenges limiting the effectiveness of *People, Politics and Power* as a political mobilization tool, with a cumulative mean of 4.01. Respondents agreed that limited access to *AIT*, perceived political bias, time constraints, misinformation and other difficulties affected the programme's effectiveness. This finding is significant because it prevents the study from

presenting television influence as automatic or absolute. The positive results on exposure, awareness and mobilization must be considered alongside the conditions that can weaken media influence. The issue of perceived political bias is particularly important because the effectiveness of political communication depends partly on audience trust. If viewers believe that political discussions favour particular candidates or parties, they may question the credibility of the information presented. This concern is supported by Igboeli and Omoko (2025), whose comparative examination of NTA and *AIT* coverage of the 2023 presidential election found that, although the stations displayed some degree of objectivity, subtle forms of bias remained. The study also reported that *AIT* was perceived to have contributed to voter-registration mobilization and information about polling units, showing that positive mobilizing capacity can exist alongside concerns about impartiality. The problem of misinformation provides another important qualification. Suemo et al. (2023) found that negative ideological content, falsehood and hate-oriented messages in social media political campaigns could undermine voter education and contribute to political apathy. Inobemhe, Ja'afaru and Garba (2024) similarly identified misinformation, political polarisation and the digital divide among the challenges surrounding Nigeria's contemporary electoral media environment. These findings reinforce an important implication of Agenda-Setting Theory: what becomes salient to the public depends not only on what the media choose to emphasise, but also on the credibility, accessibility and competitive information environment surrounding those messages. In practical terms, *People, Politics and Power* can attract audiences and contribute to political awareness, but its mobilizing capacity may be reduced when viewers cannot access the programme conveniently, question its neutrality or encounter contradictory and misleading information elsewhere.The Uses and Gratifications Theory posits that perceived bias, misinformation, inconvenient scheduling and limited access can reduce the programme's ability to satisfy audience needs. If viewers believe that political information is biased or unreliable, they may seek alternative sources. Likewise, if the programme is difficult to access or poorly scheduled, audiences can migrate to social media or online platforms that provide political information at times and in formats that better suit their preferences. Thus, UGT explains not only why viewers used the programme, but also why they might discontinue or supplement that use.

Conclusion

The study concludes that *AIT*'s *People, Politics and Power* played a significant and generally positive role in political communication, voter education and perceived political mobilisation among viewers in Lokoja during Nigeria's 2023 presidential

election. The high level of exposure to the programme (4.09), strong political awareness generated among respondents (4.14), and positive perception of its contribution to political mobilisation and electoral participation (4.12) indicate that television remained a relevant avenue through which citizens could obtain political information, understand electoral issues and develop greater interest in participating in the democratic process. The findings further demonstrate that exposure was shaped not only by the relevance of the programme but also by political interest, *AIT* accessibility, broadcast timing, social-media promotion and electricity/network conditions, while limited access, perceived political bias, time constraints and misinformation constituted important barriers to its effectiveness. Viewed through Agenda-Setting Theory, the findings suggest that the programme's sustained attention to electoral issues, candidates, governance and political developments helped make these matters salient to viewers, while Uses and Gratifications Theory explains how audiences' political interests and information needs influenced their decision to engage with the programme. The study therefore concludes that television can still contribute meaningfully to voter education and political mobilisation in Nigeria, but its effectiveness depends on credible and balanced content, convenient access, audience engagement and its ability to complement rather than compete unsuccessfully with the rapidly expanding digital media environment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and in direct response to the five objectives, the following recommendations are made:

1. Since the study established a high level of exposure to *People, Politics and Power* and strong levels of political awareness among viewers, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should sustain partnerships with credible television stations and provide timely, accurate and easily understandable information on voter registration, voting procedures, polling-unit arrangements, electoral offences, citizens' rights and responsibilities. Such information should be provided well before elections and maintained throughout the electoral cycle so that voter education is not limited to the immediate election period.
2. In view of the finding that the programme was perceived to have contributed positively to political mobilisation and electoral participation, broadcasters should give greater attention to issue-based discussions, candidate manifestoes, public policy, governance and citizens' concerns rather than allowing political programmes to become dominated by personality attacks or partisan exchanges. Interactive formats such as phone-ins, town-hall discussions, debates and

opportunities for citizens to ask questions should be encouraged to transform viewers from passive audiences into informed participants in democratic discourse.

3. The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) should improve monitoring of electoral broadcasting and strengthen professional standards. The NBC should closely monitor political programmes during election periods to ensure balanced representation of competing viewpoints, fairness in the treatment of candidates and parties, responsible language and compliance with broadcasting regulations. Particular attention should be given to the concern about perceived political bias identified in the study. Broadcasters should also be encouraged to establish stronger internal fact-checking and verification mechanisms so that misinformation, unverified electoral claims and inflammatory content do not undermine public confidence in political communication.
4. INEC, NBC and other relevant policymakers should address the accessibility and infrastructural factors that limit audience exposure. The study found that *AIT* availability, programme scheduling, electricity and network conditions affected exposure. Consequently, policymakers and relevant stakeholders should work towards wider broadcast coverage, improved transmission infrastructure and greater reliability of communication networks, while broadcasters should schedule important voter-education programmes at times convenient for the majority of viewers.
5. Government, INEC, NBC, media organisations and civil-society stakeholders should develop an integrated electoral communication strategy that connects television with digital media. The findings show that television now operates within a broader communication environment in which social media and online platforms compete for audience attention. Rather than treating these platforms as separate or competing spaces, policymakers and media organisations should integrate television, social media, online fact-checking and community-based communication into a coordinated voter-education framework.

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